

**MESSAGE OF THE FATHER GENERAL
TO THE DELEGATION OF INDONESIA
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS FIRST FRATERNAL VISIT**

Fr. Leo Pessini, Superior General (visited from November 12 to 16, 2015)
Fr. Aris Miranda, Consultor (visited from October 26 to November 16, 2015)

*“... A small little plant, despite the
persecutions, would grow and spread throughout the
world and very good people would enter it”*
Vita Manoscritta, 454

*To our dear Fr. Luigi Galvani, MI, Delegate Superior of the Indonesian Camillian Delegation,
to our Camillian Indonesian confreres - Fr. Alfons Oles, Fr. Avensius Harung, Fr. Cyrelus
Andi, Fr. Ignasius Sibar, and Bro. Mensianus Aman, and to our dear Camillian seminarians!*

Health and Peace in the Lord of our lives!

A fraternal visit to our Camillian communities spread out in over 40 countries has been a normal mandate entrusted to the General Superior and his Consultors. However, this ministry was strongly requested as an important need of the Order during the last extraordinary General Chapter in Aricia, Rome on June 2014. I took it not simply as a routine mandate but more of a fraternal responsibility, challenged by Pope Francis in his insistent appeal to reach out the confreres (*Chiesa in uscita*), to make a personal “exodus” towards the other (*theology of encounter*) in the context of the Year of the Consecrated Life (2015). This is not only a matter of signing books of the communities, nor formal and boring meetings of individual religious or the communities, but above all *being with you*, praying with you, sharing in your joys and struggles as sons of St. Camillus. This is my fourth fraternal visit to the Asia Pacific since I took office in mid-June of 2014.

Our visit to Indonesia was precipitated by unexpected delays. Fr. Leo was stranded for several days in three different airports of Fiumicino (Roma), Doha (Qatar) and Denpasar (Bali) because of the volcanic eruptions near Bali, which spew fumes and ashes in the air and caused the temporary closure of Denpasar airport. Nonetheless, the General Consulta’s and my presence was secured ahead of time upon the visit of Fr. Aris Miranda, the General Consultor responsible for the Camillian Ministry who arrived in Indonesia on October 26 and stayed there until November 16. Fr. Aris Miranda visited the two “communities” that we have in Flores: aspirancy in Ruteng and postulancy in Maumere. He spent more time with you and gave sessions to our seminarians on Camillian vocation and ministry. Finally, on November 12, I touched down Maumere airport moved by your warm welcome and honor as you rendered “jai” a typical ritual dance of honoring a guest at home.

Moreover, we were touched upon hearing how long you have been reciting a special prayer (in Bahasa and English alternately) for the visit of the Father General at the end of the daily Eucharistic celebration for one month. Indeed, we were expected and for this visit, you prepared very well an intensive program of activities internally and externally like visiting the bishop's house, other religious congregations and seminaries in Maumere.

A Past Revisited: knowing the “beginnings” of this history, facts and persons

Just a glimpse of the past that constitutes “history” in the making of the Camillian mission to Indonesia. This mission is the latest landmark of growth of the Camillian charism in the Asia Pacific. Indonesia is a secular democratic society, which is the home to the world's largest Muslim population of 207.2 million. The five main religions are Islam (87.2%), Protestant (6.9%), Catholic (2.9%), Hindu (1.7%) and Buddhist (0.7%). (cf. [2010 Census](#)). In Bali, you will find a place where the five major churches constructed side by side with each other seeing people and pilgrims coming to worship in their own respective place. This is a token of religious tolerance in this immense archipelago. Christianity began in Indonesia with the arrival of Portuguese voyagers in search of spices and the missionaries who boarded their ships in the 16th century. When the Portuguese captured Malacca in 1511, the missionaries moved into the region. The most notable among them was St. Francis Xavier in 1546-47. In 1566, Dominican missionaries arrived in Flores. Since then, the growth of Catholicism became phenomenal particularly in this island. In the last century, a new protagonist arrived, the SVD missionaries which at present account to more than 1500 members in 4 Provinces and more than 200 seminarians in philosophy and theology studying at their very own St. Paul Major Seminary of Ledalero built in 1937. This seminary is forming over 900 students coming from all the religious congregations of Maumere, the five dioceses of Flores housed at St. Peter Major Seminary of Ritapiret with 209 diocesan seminarians under the guidance of 11 formators. When St. Pope John Paul II visited Flores in 1989, he spent overnight at this seminary in Ritapiret. Today, the bedrooms where he stayed and his secretary are preserved and treasured as a special memory of that visit and today many people go to see as an holy and interesting place.

In 1996, Fr. Luigi Galvani, the then vice-provincial of the Far East Vice Province and his vicar Fr. Giovanni Rizzi ventured to Indonesia and reached the islands of Flores and East Timor in 1996. They came to see and study the possibility of seeding a Camillian mission in this country of 17.000 islands with 240 million inhabitants. In 1997, the second visit to Indonesia in Dili (now the capital of Timor Leste), Fr Luigi discovered a small dispensary named after St. Camillus de Lellis which was built by a Canossian Sister who is a devotee to St. Camillus and an alumnus of Camillianum in Rome. During his third visit in 1999, determined to implement the Provincial Chapter resolution of "*promoting missionary awareness among religious by expanding Camillian presence in Asia*", he began to meet young candidates who were then studying at the diocesan minor seminary of Mataloko (in Flores).

In 2000, the first seven candidates were chosen, and placed under the care of Fr. Andreas Mua, an Indonesian SVD, who passed away recently. Fr. Andreas had zealously prepared our candidates for religious formation at Ledalero seminary. In May 2000, the first seven (7) candidates arrived in Manila, which was followed by another group of five (5) after a year. Fr Luigi considered Fr. Andreas as the person designated by the “Divine Providence” to accompany our journey here from the very beginning. “*He is for us an angel custodian of the Indonesians.*” (Cf. *Chronicle of the Indonesian Delegation, La nave Camilliana in Indonesia*).

In July 2009, the first Camillian community in a rented house was established in Maumere together with the four (4) Indonesian Camillian religious priests (Alfons, Avensius, Andi, Ignas) and Fr. Luigi as the superior of the community.

In 2010, the Philippine Province officially erected the community that began accepting new candidates. At the same time, the Camillians took the responsibility for the chaplaincy ministry at a public hospital. By 2011, the General Consulta has approved the erection of a new seminary (*St. Camillus Formation Center*) which at present housed 28 postulants. In the same year, the Delegation was attached juridically to the Philippine Province. In 2014, a second house for the Aspirants (19) was constructed in Ruteng, about 393 kilometers from Maumere.

The fruit of perseverance and determination under the protection of the Divine Providence

The citation of a short passage at the beginning of this message from the Testament Letter of St. Camillus sets the tone of our thoughts and reflections on our recent visit to your Delegation. In these words, our beloved Father Camillus has exhorted us to keep alive the fervor of charity towards the sick and to live united to one another; not to lose heart in the face of the difficulties that we would always encounter in the exercise of our ministry; and to love our Institute. We use the same words to encourage you to move forward and carry on this task of nurturing this "little plant" so that it will grow, bear fruits and its branches and trunks will provide shades of security and protection for many needy people, but especially to those who are sick and suffering.

Our visit to Maumere and Ruteng was accompanied by undesirable circumstances such as the volcanic eruption of Bali, cancellation of flights, difficulty of rebooking and the rugged uphill and downhill 12-hour land trip to Maumere, which Fr. Aris had experienced. On the other hand, I imagined also the preparation that you had and the excitement of everybody in the delegation to meet us in order to proudly present your current situation, its humble gains and accomplishments, and the need to discuss certain issues that matters most for the growth of the Order whose "geography" is clearly shifting towards the Orient. And so I made it happen with no grim of regrets at all but joys of satisfaction and deep appreciation for what has been done and your unanimous desire to make this mission more meaningful to the sick and to the Order. Let me just cite to you some of our observations and reflections during my five days of stay with you and Fr. Aris' three-week presence in both communities.

When I arrived Maumere, my first reaction was that of wonder and awe. I was amazed with the present achievement of this delegation, which from the very beginning has caught already an attention from the entire Order in different discussions of provincial and capitular assemblies. For instance, it was not unknown to me the moratorium declared by the General Government of the Order in 2007, on the opening of new missions abroad which then affected the plans for Indonesia. It was a discouraging moment but it is worth mentioning here because from there we drew out new lessons and reflections. The temporary suspension did not discourage you but it gave time and opportunities to sharpen your plans for the future of this mission. Indeed, it did not discourage the pioneers. Rather, it became an impetus to move forward with determination to gain the right moment to formalize this mission. This process went into what I called a "healthy transgression" which in the end nothing was seriously violated against the moratorium, rather it has facilitated the process of establishment to be in

order. This led you to complete the formation of the first group of Indonesians in the Philippines in view of preparing them to lay down the cornerstone of this mission in their homeland. This gave you enough time to sharpen the feasibility study of where to start building the foundation; how to sustain it financially; and strengthen the morale of the pioneering group. At the end of these hurdles, what emerged as the true source of your strength is the “*Divine Providence*”, which you invoked every day in your daily prayers from the chapel, to the grotto and to the refectory. We could feel how our seminarians relished it while invoking praises to the Providence.

The number of young candidates to Camillian religious life (19 aspirants, 28 postulants, 4 pre novices and 1 scholastic) is the biggest achievement that this delegation has garnered so far. This dimension of our Camillian ministry, i.e., formation ministry, merits our utmost support because of its crucial role in securing the future of our Institute and the propagation of witnessing the mercy of God in a dehumanized world of health. You have claimed that this is the golden time of vocation in Indonesia. In fact, the number of candidates from other congregations and even in the dioceses shows an upward trend. These are homegrown vocations, which means coming mainly from Flores.

We have learned that you are building new strategies in promoting vocation, such as transferring the Aspirancy community to Manggarai district (whose capital city is Ruteng) and where 90% of our candidates are coming from and the expansion of your target areas outside Flores like Timor where Catholicism is making inroads and trade and schools’ development are far better compared to Flores.

We admired the simple lifestyle and frugality practiced by our seminarians. They do housekeeping, washing their clothes and dishes and spent more time in their academic endeavors. Most of them are coming from farmer families where hard work, patience, perseverance, sharing and religiosity are the rules of life. The social and physical environment at present is very supportive to this kind of lifestyle. The only extravagance that we have known here is when families celebrate the first communion of their children and the matrimony where they feasted for 3 days with food, drinks, dance and music. These are favorable conditions (in particular the natural rules of life) to nurture religious vocations. These conditions need to be integrated into their religious formation. It serve as a fertile ground on which formation much be anchored apart from the gospel values and the Camillian tradition. Thus, it demands a more integrated and culturally sensitive formation program. If this formation will not be properly framed where norms and expectations are clearly defined, this can create confusion among them that will lead to frustrations of candidates.

You have also introduced to our seminarians a very important classical apostolate of the Camillians, i.e., visiting the sick in their homes and distributing Holy Communion. St. Camillus in his time insisted on this type of apostolate apart from hospital ministry. When you are in a place where the sick person lives, you will see better his or her physical, social and religious environment. This will help our seminarians to understand the complex reality of sickness and suffering particularly in the developing countries where the poor have no full access to healthcare services. In this way, they would not simply end up by pushing their goal of consoling the sick but helping them to understand better their situation and find strength to move on by themselves.

I always believe that today we need to change our paradigm in dealing with the sick people. Let us not leave the sick lying on their bed but help them to stand, move and walk. (cf. *Camillian Constitution no. 46*). Remember this passage from the gospel of John when Jesus met a paralytic man. "Do you want to be well? The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me.' Jesus said to him, 'Rise, take up your mat, and walk.' Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked." (John 5, 6-9).

We are glad to know of your involvement with the health care ministry of the Diocese of Maumere. Though we were not able to meet the bishop (he was in Jakarta for the meeting of the Episcopal Conference of Indonesia), his secretary has relayed to us his appreciation to your commitment to the health care ministry of the Diocese. To you were given two specific responsibilities, namely: chaplaincy ministry in two hospitals where our seminarians are going on weekends for apostolate, and the coordination of the anti-malaria program of the diocese that targets remote communities where access to healthcare services is nil. Engaging with public health concerns such as the anti-malaria program is highly recommendable. As we are involved in the process of revitalizing the Order by retrieving the radical spirit of our holy founder, it is important to be more open to new challenges in the world of health and "expand the horizon of ministry – in line with the mandate of the community – beyond the limited field of our apostolic works (palliative care, prevention, **public health**, domestic church, home care, education in and promotion of health, etc.)" (*Camillian Project, No. 2.2, also cf. Camillian Constitution no. 43*).

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning here the influence and contribution that you had to other religious congregations, the new arrivals. I learned that since the first religious missionary congregations set its foot to Maumere such as the Dominicans, Jesuits, *Societas Verbi Divini* (SVD), Passionists, etc., there was a long gap before another wave of missionaries came. When the Camillians set its foot in 1996, several congregations came after us. You have been helping and accompanying them to establish themselves in Maumere. Some of them were encouraged by your stories. We became part of bringing the richness of the Church in terms of charisms and ministries to this Diocese. This is also an act of gratitude to the care that the SVD has shared to us for years and the openness of the diocese to us. In fact, our pioneers were studying at the diocesan seminary before they met us. To our fellow workers in the vineyard of the Lord, you have shown your fraternal and maternal concern.

We were impressed of the dedication of our religious to this delegation. Fully conscious of the great challenges that lie ahead, they learned early to make sacrifices. All of you have gone or have been doing specializations in the field of formation, theology, and spirituality. It is because of your sacrifices in shouldering each other's responsibilities in the meantime so that others can take a leave of absence from the delegation in order to study abroad. This is a very encouraging and courageous act of generosity. Formation ministry is a demanding responsibility. It entails a lot of personal and formal preparation. This is an absolute priority of the Order because here lies the future of the Order. (cf. *Camillian Constitution no. 78; cf. also Camillian Project no. 2.4*). There are risks, however, such as being overwhelmed by big responsibilities. However, you have calculated fairly the risk and found ways of sustaining each another through constant communication and coaching which become an effective means of support.

We also appreciate your efforts to achieve economic sustainability of this delegation in the future by constructing the St. Camillus Youth and Social Center in Maumere, a dormitory for students studying in the city, through the help of the Austrian Province and Italian benefactors. This brings hope to possible source of income in the near future for the future of the delegation.

Marching ahead and being open to new opportunities and challenges

The Camillian Indonesian Delegation, which is juridically part of the Philippine Province, is undoubtedly signaling better opportunities for the Order particularly in terms of vocations and potentials to offer our services to the church and to the society. There is a lively growth of Catholic vocations in this island and opportunities to exercise our ministry of witnessing the merciful love of Christ to the sick. You have chosen to concentrate first in promoting Camillian vocation and formation, which is an intelligent choice. As you are still in the process of completing the formation program and setting up structures that will facilitate a smooth implementation of the program, we would like to recall some issues that we have partly discussed during our meeting that need careful attention and adequate response.

1. *An integrated and holistic formation program is the lifeline of any religious Institute.* In order to secure this at the start, a written and well-defined relevant religious formation program is necessary. It is a kind of program that sets standards and expectations (clear guidelines) in every levels of formation based on the ideals of the Order as expressed in our Constitution, in the Basic Norms of Formation and in the documents of the Church. Since you are still at the beginning and considering the resources (human and material) at your disposal, it would be good to start designing this program and asking help from the mother Province (Philippines) who had already an established norms of formation. You have religious who are professionally prepared to do this. This program will be handed to our candidates so that it will serve as their “*daily bible of formation*” that will help them to interiorize their experience in the seminary. This will serve also as reference for formators in performing periodic evaluation of candidates as well as standards for admitting new candidates.
2. *The number of candidates are showing a lively growth.* Most of them are fresh graduates from senior high schools but you are also receiving inquiries from adults either college or professional levels.
3. Another observation is that due to the limited number of formators and the lack of physical structure, the different levels of formands (seminarians) are sharing in the same roof with the same program. In fact, the decision to open up a house for aspirants is already an initial response to this issue. In view of this, there is a need to define the different levels of formation (aspirancy, postulancy, pre-novitiate, pastoral, scholasticate) and diversify its program and activities according to their needs and our standards. As to the daily activities of the seminarians, a regular in house formation to Camillian history, charism, ministry and spirituality should not be compromised with academic studies. Their apostolate experience should be accompanied and evaluated periodically, in terms of a growing learning experience and as a precious moment for a personal, pastoral and spiritual growth. This will help them to understand better and interiorize their formation experience and endeavors.

4. *Formation communities: at present, two houses of formation: aspirancy and postulancy.* You have presented your plans to open up a novitiate and a scholasticate houses in the near future. We do agree with you and we have to as the situation itself demands. As we open more houses, obviously it needs personnel in particular formators where at present we do not have. In order to fill in this vacuum, we would like to reiterate the direction we would like to take as clearly stated in our Camillian Project. “The important and delicate field of initial formation is perhaps the aspect that most highlights in an unequivocal way the need for the unification of efforts and cooperation between Provinces and/or exchange with other Institutes, both for a more effective optimization of resources and for a more complete formation of candidates.” (*Camillian Project no. 2.4*). To make it more concrete, we would like to encourage the provincial administration of your mother province to help the delegation in resolving this issue. On our part, we will try to encourage other provinces to support your efforts financially, morally and spiritually.
5. *Initial formation of the candidates: implement a process of continuity and sound content.* In each level of formation, particular programs and activities must be coordinated and follow a certain logic of direction to assure *continuity and solidity of the initial formation of candidates*. Here, we would like to recommend a regular dialogue and programmatic discussion among the formators aside from regular community meetings. Some of our formators are also involved in the common formation program created by groups of religious congregations in Maumere. This is a healthy venue for furthering discussions, comparing “processes” with other formators and listening to their experience and reflections.
6. *Regional meeting of formators in Indonesia.* In view of an encouraging support and visioning a common project of formation among Camillian provinces and delegations, we are inviting the Consultor for Formation, Fr. Laurent Zoungrana and Fr. Babychan, the regional representative for Formation for Asia-Pacific, to organize next year a Pan Asiatic conference or meeting of formators. If it’s possible, an ideal place to hold this conference will be in Maumere as a sign of support to this new and promising Camillian mission.
7. *Main priority: pastoral vocation and formation as your primary concern.* However, it is recommendable to explore other areas of ministry that will make our witnessing visible in the Church. This is a viable aid for vocation promotion since the people and families will come to know more about us. Your involvement in the anti-malaria program, medical-dental mission and supplemental feeding program that you have been doing so far are initiatives that needs to be plan with regular frequency, in order to build impact on the lives of the sick people.
8. *Communion and communication with the mother Province.* We are aware of the difficulties in establishing a more systematic and constant cooperation between the Philippine Province and the Delegation of Indonesia. We would like to express our desire, which applies also to other Provinces and Delegations of the Order, aside from the Philippines and Indonesia, *to require representation from the Delegation during meetings of the Provincial Council in order that pertinent concerns and sensitive issues are proper and adequately heard, evaluated, and considered.* We cannot have the right perspective and prospective in dealing with very sensitive human issues regarding formation, neither deciding alone, nor by “flight” or by decree!

There is a need to sit, talk, respectfully listening to one another, confront and discuss issues together and find the best way to solve them. In other words, search for solutions that promote a vision and not division.

As we conclude this message to your Delegation, we are fully aware that this letter is somewhat long. However, we did this intentionally in order to assure, first, the support and the commitment of the General Government to walk closely with you, and secondly to make known to the entire Camillian Order, what's going on in terms of future perspective of this Delegation, and for the Camillian Order. As we look at the "geography" of the Camillian Order today, we realized that some places are fastly aging and dying, and unfortunately without a lucid perspective of growth or renewal other than to end up at least with dignity like in some European countries. Here, we are in touch with the real hope for the future of our Order in the Asia Pacific region or for the entire Order.

As we are writing this message, we came to realize that *trusting* is far more important than *understanding (rational)*. Many things that are happening in Flores in terms of vocations among Christian Catholics *is really a mystery* for many that cannot be fathomed only by an intellectual search and rational understanding of the reality. Let's trust, hope and pray. As regards to this "*ministry*", we need to take it very seriously rather than simply taking it for granted. What comes after or nothing, is God's business and not ours! In the name of the General Government of the Order, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the warm welcome and fraternal intimacy during our stay at your community.

At this point, we would like to impart to you, the blessing, that St. Camillus pronounced during the last moments of his life, in these words: "*Let me finish here by sending all of you a thousand blessings on the Lord God's Behalf insofar as this is granted to me by him, not only to those of this present time but to all still to come who will be members of our holy Order until the end of the world.*" (**Testament Letter of Saint Camillus**). May God, bless you all, and our founding Father Saint Camillus always protect you, with good health and a fruitful Camillian ministry.

Fraternally yours,

Rome, November 22, 2015

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